

OP-EDS

GRAVEL CAN STILL MAKE A MOUNTAIN

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Mike Gravel was to Bob Barr's left in more ways than one at the Libertarian National Convention in 2008.
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The passing of former United States Senator Mike Gravel (D-AK) on June 26 was largely overshadowed by that of former Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld three days later. The same need not be true of their political legacies.

Fifty years to the month before, while Rumsfeld was Counselor to President Richard Nixon, Gravel “didn’t really know what the legal consequences would be” of “resting on the speech and debate clause of the Constitution” to make public the top secret Pentagon Papers that turned popular opinion against the Vietnam War.

In 2008, Gravel was one of the few presidential candidates offering a break from Rumsfeld’s renewed militarism in the Middle East, as term limits prevented George W. Bush’s re-election but not the continu-

ation of his wars. Those wars remained ongoing as Gravel ran again in 2020, by which time he would have entered the Oval Office as a nonagenarian.

Mike's antiwar "Gravelanche" paralleled the **scene** in Jim Henson's fantasy film *Labyrinth* where a motley group of underdogs use an ability to "call the rocks" to summon enough boulders to drive back an army. If Gravel's message had far less impact on the engagements in Afghanistan and Iraq than in Vietnam, it may not be simply because Americans have, like Dana Carvey's *Saturday Night Live* impersonation of George Bush (senior), **failed** to generalize the example of Vietnam beyond Vietnam.

To some degree, Gravel was simply less heeded in the twenty-first century. At the height of his influence, he **admitted** to *The New York Times* that he could only "chip away, bit by bit, for what I want" if he built enough grassroots support that "they will have to listen to me in the Senate." Even so, it's hard to tell how many assumed that the battle against war was too far uphill for them to have an effect. A renewed peace movement might find itself garnering wins as seemingly unattainable as what Howard Zinn called "the impossible victory" of ending the war in Vietnam.

Gravel's 2008 announcement that "I'm joining the Libertarian Party because it is a party that combines a commitment to freedom and peace" pointed to an alliance which never quite materialized. Yet successful efforts to **expose government malfeasance** and **decriminalize personal choice** pioneered by marginalized mavericks like Mike Gravel and **Jesse Ventura** could be expanded to more areas, and perhaps even all, of social life.

New Yorker Joel Schlosberg is a contributing editor at The William Lloyd Garrison Center for Libertarian Advocacy Journalism.

PUBLICATION/CITATION HISTORY

1. "**Gravel Can Still Make a Mountain**" by Joel Schlosberg, Anchorage, Alaska Press, July 5, 2021
2. "**(Mike) Gravel Can Still Make a Mountain**" by Joel Schlosberg, AntiWar.com Blog, July 5, 2021
3. "**Gravel Can Still Make a Mountain**" by Joel Schlosberg, OpEdNews, July 6, 2021
4. "**Gravel can still make a mountain**" by Joel Schlosberg, Intrepid Report, July 7, 2021
5. "**Gravel Can Still Make a Mountain**" by Joel Schlosberg, CounterPunch, July 7, 2021
6. "**Registering political views**" by Thomas L. Knapp [sic], Madill, Oklahoma Record, July 7, 2021
7. "**Gravel can still make a mountain**" by Joel Schlosberg, The Millbury, Ohio Press, July 9, 2021